



News Release

For Immediate Release:

Monday, June 30, 2008

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UDOH Gets Fed's Help in Obesity Fight

Funds Will Create New State Program

(Salt Lake City, UT) – A much-needed infusion of more than \$2 million in federal funds will help the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) help others reach a healthy weight. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will give the state \$455,000 annually over the next five years to develop a new Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity (PANO) Program.

“The aim of the new program is to reduce the number of Utahns who are overweight and obese, and to finally slow the rate of growth of obesity in Utah,” said UDOH Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall.

UDOH officials are confident the goal can be reached through a combination of system and environmental changes. “The grant will let us develop new programs to prevent obesity and promote healthy weight, and help ensure the quality and effectiveness of all our programs,” said Heather Borski, Director of the Bureau of Health Promotion. Current programs include Fruits & Veggies–More Matters, Unplug 'n Play, and UtahWalks.

Although Utah ranks 47th lowest in the nation in obesity rates (2007 data), more than 1,000,000 Utahns are overweight or obese. Among adults, nearly two-thirds (64.1%) of men and nearly half (48.2%) of women are at an unhealthy weight. In 2007, 57% of Utah adults were either overweight or obese.

Over the past several years, the Utah Dept. of Health has been active in implementing initiatives to address the obesity issue with minimal resources.

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Competition for the federal funds was intense. Fifty-one U.S. states and territories applied; Utah was one of only eight new states to get the nod, and joins 15 other previously-funded states that will continue to receive monies.

During the first year of funding, the Utah Department of Health will build the PANO program by hiring new staff and building on a coalition of diverse partners who will help develop a five-year state plan for obesity prevention. Plans also include identifying priority populations; improving ways to evaluate the effectiveness of programs; and monitoring trends in obesity and associated risk factors. Future efforts will focus on working with public and private partners to promote policies and environments that support healthy behaviors in communities, worksites, and schools.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.